

Message Text

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15

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R 081430Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3147

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1292

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: MERGER OF SOCIALIST UNIONIST MOVEMENT WITH SYRIAN BAATH
PARTY

1. SUMMARY: MERGER OF TINY SPLINTER GROUP SOCIALIST
UNIONIST MOVEMENT INTO SYRIAN BAATH PARTY HAS MINIMAL
PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE BUT IS BEING PLAYED UP HERE AS
SIGN OF INCREASED AUTHORITY OF SYRIAN BAATH PARTY.
END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN MEDIA EVENING MARCH 29 ANNOUNCED THAT THE BAATH
"NATIONAL COMMAND" HAD ACCEPTED THE APPLICATION OF
SYRIAN SOCIALIST UNIONIST MOVEMENT TO MERGE INTO THE
SYRIAN BAATH PARTY. THE NATIONAL COMMAND DIRECTED THE
SYRIAN REGIONAL COMMAND TO IMPLEMENT THIS DECISION.

3. THE SOCIALIST UNIONIST MOVEMENT IS A TINY SPLINTER
GROUP DATING BACK TO THE EARLY 60'S IN SYRIA'S
POLITICAL HISTORY. PARTY LUMINARY ADHAM MUSTAFA
STATED IN APRIL 5 AL-THAWRAH INTERVIEW THAT PARTY
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EVOLVED FROM BAATH ROOTS, A CLAIM SUPPORTED BY BAATH

PARTY MEMBER WE TALKED WITH RECENTLY. APPARENTLY PARTY WAS FORMED IN 1961 BY GROUP OF PRO-NASSER BAATHISTS WHO REPUDIATED SECESSION OF SYRIA FROM UNION WITH EGYPT. KNOWLEDGEABLE FSL STATES THAT IT HAS PERHAPS NO MORE THAN 200 ACTIVE MEMBERS WHILE ANOTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE CLAIMS PARTY MEMBERSHIP NOT ABOVE "FEW DOZENS." ITS MOST PROMINENT MEMBER IS SAMI SUFAN, NOW SERVING IN CAIRO AS MINISTER OF STATE/PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND PLANNING AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF THE TRIPARTITE FEDERATION (SYRIA-EGYPT-LIBYA).

4. THE MERGER OF THIS SPLINTER GROUP INTO THE SYRIAN BAATH LEAVES ONLY THE ARAB SOCIALIST FEDERATION, LED BY SYRIAN CULTURE AND GUIDANCE MINISTER KAYALI, THE HAWRANIST ARAB SOCIALISTS AND THE SYRIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AS PARTICIPATING MEMBERS OF SYRIAN NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FRONT.

5. THIS MERGER WITH SYRIA'S RULING PARTY IS BELIEVED TO BE THE FIRST TO HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THE ACCESSION TO POWER OF THE SYRIAN BAATH PARTY IN 1963. ITS PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE IS MINIMAL. SYRIAN MEDIA, HOWEVER, FEATURED IT AS A HEADLINE ITEM ON T.V., RADIO AND PRESS ON MARCH 30 SUGGESTING THE REGIME'S DESIRE TO EXPLOIT THIS STEP AS EVIDENCE OF STRENGTHENED NATIONAL UNITY AND BAATH PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE PROBABLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TIMING OF THIS MOVE IS THAT IT COINCIDES WITH BAATH PARTY ELECTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL CONGRESS WHICH WILL LEAD TO SELECTION OF A NEW REGIONAL COMMAND OF THE SYRIAN BAATH AND A POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE. THE MOVE MAY MEAN NO MORE THAN THE DESIRE OF SAMI SUFAN TO RETURN TO A CABINET POST IN DAMASCUS.
PELLETREAU

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